

# Wellness Notes

## Hearing Loss\*

(Part III)

### Symptoms and Diagnosis

Some people may have a hearing problem without realizing it. Others might think they have a problem, but are too embarrassed to tell their doctor, friends, or family. You can help identify a possible hearing problem by asking yourself some key questions and, if necessary, having your hearing checked by a doctor. If a hearing loss is ignored or untreated, it can get worse. But a hearing loss that is identified early can be helped through treatment, such as hearing aids, certain medicines, and surgery.

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer "yes" to three or more of these questions, you could have a hearing problem and may need to have your hearing checked by a doctor.

- Do I have a problem hearing on the telephone?
- Do I have trouble hearing when there is noise in the background?
- Is it hard for me to follow a conversation when two or more people talk at once?
- Do I have to strain to understand a conversation?
- Do many people I talk to seem to mumble or not speak clearly?
- Do I misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately?
- Do I often ask people to repeat themselves?
- Do I have trouble understanding the speech of women and children?
- Do people complain that I turn the TV volume up too high?
- Do I hear a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound a lot?
- Do some sounds seem too loud?

If you think that you have a hearing problem, schedule an appointment with your family doctor. In some cases, he or she may refer you to an otolaryngologist. This doctor has special training in problems of the ear, nose, throat, head, and neck.

Your doctor may also recommend that you visit an audiologist. An audiologist is a health professional who can identify and measure hearing loss. The tests that an audiologist performs are painless. If you need a hearing aid, an audiologist can help you choose the right one.